

## Last Days of Persecution

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of the victims committed suicide rather than suffer pollution. The story of St. Pelagia of Antioch is typical. Maximin sent some soldiers to conduct her to his palace. They found her alone in her house and announced their errand. With perfect composure this girl of fifteen asked permission to retire in order to change her dress, and then, mounting to the roof, threw herself down into the street below. Eusebius, himself an eye-witness of this persecution, gives many a vivid story of the fury of Maximin and his officials, and of the cold-blooded calculation with which he sought to draw new victims into the net of the law. In 308 he issued an edict ordering every city and village thoroughly to repair any temple which, for whatever reason, had been allowed to fall into ruins. He increased tenfold the number of priesthoods, and insisted upon daily sacrifices. The magistrates were again strictly enjoined to compel men, women, children, and slaves alike to offer sacrifice and partake of the sacrificial food. All goods exposed for sale in the public markets were to be sprinkled with lustral water, and even at the entrance to the public baths, officials were to be placed to see that no one passed through the doors without throwing a few grains of incense on the altar. Maximin, in short, was a religious bigot, who combined with a zealous observance of pagan ritual a consuming hatred of Christianity.

There are not many records of what was taking place in the provinces of Galerius, while Maximin was thus terrorising Syria and Egypt. But the Emperor had begun to see that the persecution,